



City of Seattle

Greg Nickels, Mayor

Bill Wright Technology Matching Fund Grant Program Evaluation Report: Executive Summary

Study Conducted by MGS Consulting for
the City of Seattle Department of Information Technology
Community Technology Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Technology Matching Fund (TMF) grant program was established in 1997 by the City of Seattle to support the community's efforts to close the digital divide and encourage a technology-healthy city. The program provides grants by matching in cash the community's contribution of volunteer labor, materials, professional services, or cash. Funds are provided on a reimbursement basis.

In December 2004, MGS Consulting designed and implemented an evaluation process to begin to understand and articulate the value and impact of the TMF grant program. Our study included a grant documentation review, a grantee survey, and case study visits. This executive summary includes the key findings we discovered in our evaluation work.

KEY FINDINGS

Our evaluation of the TMF program yielded four major findings:

1. The TMF grant program reaches a diverse group of people. This diversity is in line with national and city target populations of those underserved or left behind in the digital divide.
2. The people who participate in these programs have life-changing goals (employment, literacy, accessing social services and government) and engage in TMF-sponsored technology learning programs in order to realize these goals.
3. The use of volunteers in TMF-sponsored programs has brought success and resources to the grantee organizations.
4. TMF grantee organizations have increased their staff skills and capacity as a result of their interaction with the City of Seattle during the grant process.

1. Serving diversity—bridging the digital divide

Local and national studies show that the populations most at risk of falling behind in the digital divide are African Americans and other minorities, seniors, and those with lower income and/or less education. In our sample, the TMF grant program has reached these very groups. Black, African Americans were identified as one of the primary ethnic groups, served by 62% of programs we surveyed. Thirty-six percent (36%) of the organizations served the White, low-income community and 21% served Hispanic people. American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander were each identified as one of the primary ethnic groups served by 10% of the organizations that participated in our survey.

Additionally, youth was the primary audience for 41% of the organizations in our survey, and immigrants or refugees were the primary audience for 20% of the organizations. Each of the following groups was reported being one of the primary audiences served by at least 10% of survey respondents: low-income people, seniors, adults, the homeless, and the disabled.

2. Helping people realize life-changing goals

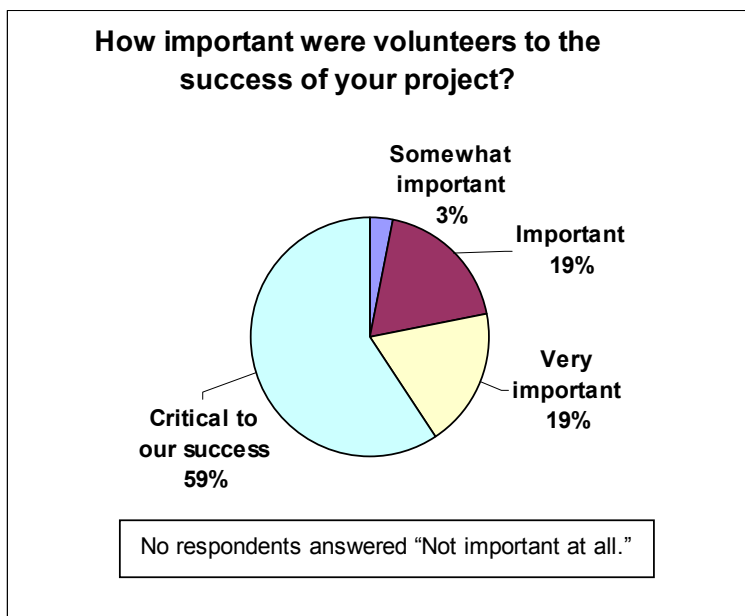
TMF-sponsored programs help participants achieve more than learn technology. In our survey, we asked the program managers to identify the goals that people had for participating in these technology programs, in addition to gaining information technology (IT) technical skills. People's goals were life-changing. The goals reported by the organizations were:

- Connect to family and friends (59% of organizations surveyed)
- Access social and government services online (44%)
- Gain workplace skills (44%)
- Get tutoring, homework help (41%)
- Improve or obtain literacy (37%)
- Find or get a job (34%)
- Adult education or GED (24%)
- English as a Second Language (ESL) and/or citizenship issues (24%)

The majority of technology skills taught were basic computer and Internet skills.¹ This is exactly what bridging the digital divide looks like in action. Participants in the TMF-sponsored programs need and are learning basic information and communications technology skills in order to apply them to their life goals. Almost half of the organizations taught intermediate computer skills (49%) and/or multimedia (44%).

3. Volunteers bringing success and resources to grantees

Volunteers were identified as important in some degree to the success of all the TMF-sponsored programs. In total, 74% of the organizations we surveyed used volunteers as part of their match for the TMF grant. Fifty-nine percent (59%) said that the volunteers were critical to the success of their programs, and 38% said that the volunteers were important or very important to the success of their programs.



Overall, 75% of the grantees reported being able to increase volunteer help in their organizations as a result of the TMF matching grant. And impressively, 47% of grantees also reported that their volunteers had helped them secure other program funding.

¹ Seventy-two percent (72%) of organizations reported teaching basic computer skills, and 65% reported teaching basic Internet skills.

4. Increasing the staff skills and capacity of grantee organizations

The Technology Matching Fund increases the organizational capacity of its recipients. Seventy-six percent (76%) of respondents indicated that their organizations had gained knowledge or skills from working with the City of Seattle during the TMF grant process.



These knowledge/skill areas were:

- Technical skills (28%)
- Partnering skills (21%)
- Curriculum content knowledge (17%)
- Skills in working with constituents (clients) (14%)
- Management and business skills (14%)

Additionally, half of the respondents said that their interaction with the City and the TMF process changed the way they used technology in their own organizations. Other reported benefits of being a TMF grantee included:

- Networking and partnering experiences
- Gaining access to other resources
- Community connection
- Extended reach for their program

RECOMMENDATION

To continue to evaluate and increase the effectiveness of TMF-sponsored programs, we recommend asking the program managers of all TMF grantee organizations to complete a questionnaire on a quarterly basis. The questionnaire would capture the same usage and demographic data that we gathered in our survey. The responses would help the City of Seattle chart the continued progress of TMF-sponsored programs by area, ethnicity, and other demographic factors and to see the emerging needs of these communities as they arise.